A SERMON

Concerning the

Worship of God in Private:

Preached before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITE-HALL.

June, 7th. 1691.

By *THO. LYNFORD.* D. D. Chaplain in Ordinary to their Majesties.

Published by Her Majesties Special Command.

LONDON,
Printed for *James Adamson* at the *Angel* and *Crown* in S. *Paul's Church-Yard.* 1691.

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Matthew vi. 6.

But thou, when thou prayeſt, enter into thy Cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret, and thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly.

OUR Saviour in the words of the Text, inſtructs us to be aware of that Hypocriſie, which the Phariſees were guilty of at their Prayers. All they deſign'd by ſuch acts of Devotion, was to gain the Applauſe of Men, and therefore they Prayed *ſtanding in the Synagogues, and in the corners of the Streets*: But our Saviour adviſeth his Diſciples to ſtudy rather how to pleaſe God, than Men; and therefore for the avoiding all manner of Oſtentation, to pray in ſecret, *and their Father who ſaw them in ſecret, would not fail to reward them openly.*

By which Advice he doth not design to prefer Praying in Private before Praying in Publick, for they are both good in their kind: And there are two great ends of Prayer, *viz.* the Glory of God, and the Edification of others, which are chiefly promoted by the latter, and not by the former. But all that he hints to us thereby, is, that we should not propose to our selves by-ends in any acts of Devotion which we perform; but should all the while we perform them, be sure to take care of the inward sentiments of our Minds, and endeavour to be so affected towards God, as it becomes such sinful, such indigent Creatures as we are; which may be effectually done, altho we Pray never so secretly, and no body has any knowledg thereof, but God and our selves.

This seems to be the purport of our Saviours Discourse; which I shall not at present inlarge upon, but shall only take occasion from the Text, to give a Description of that Worship, which may, and ought to be paid to God in Private; and then endeavour to represent to your consideration, some of those Advantages which accrue to those who are constant in the performance thereof.

I begin with a Deſcription of that Worſhip which may, and ought to be paid to God in private. And becauſe there are ſome other inſtances thereof, beſides that which is made mention of in the Text, I ſhall make it to conſiſt in theſe following particulars.

1. *In entring into our Cloſets* (as our Saviour here expreſſeth it) *and there Praying to our Father which is in ſecret.*

2. In frequently Converſing with the Scripture and ſuch good Books as treat about Religious Matters.

3. In private Meditation upon Spiritual things.

4. And laſtly, In ſecret Reflexions and ſhort Ejaculations in all places, at all times of the day, and in all tranſactions of Life.

1. One part of private Worſhip is, when at ſome ſet times we retire into our Cloſets, and there offer unto God our Prayers and Thankſgivings.

This has been the conſtant Practice of the greateſt Examples of Piety as ever the World ſaw.

To name two or three, which the Scriptues make mention of.

The Prophet *Daniel*, we are told, *kneeled*

upon his knees three times a day, and Prayed and gave Thanks, Dan. 6. 10. And the Pſalmiſt tells us, *Pſal.* 119. 164. That *ſeven times a day he did praiſe God, becauſe of his righteous judgments.* In the 10th of the *Acts v.* 9. we find *St. Peter* at Prayer by himſelf on the Houſe-top. And our bleſſed Lord and Maſter thought fit to ſeparate himſelf now and then from the reſt of the World, that he might Pray Privately; more eſpecially in the time of his greateſt Diſtreſs, and juſt before he was to *Suffer* ſo Cruel and ſo Ignominious a Death. *So* that if we would tread in the ſteps of thoſe Eminent Patterns of Virtue and true Holineſs which are gone before us; if we would follow our *Saviour's* Example as well as his Advice, we cannot but think our ſelves oblig'd to make the ſame acknowledgments in private as well as publick of our dependence upon God for what we either want or have received, as we find they did.

To determine indeed how much time is to be ſpent in ſuch Acts of Devotion, muſt be left to the Prudence and *Sincerity* of every particular Perſon, who is bound to conſider impartially his own circumſtances, and

and to govern himſelf according to them. But the general Rule to be obſerved, is, That things of this Nature muſt not be wholly neglected, and that they who have moſt leiſure, either from the publick, or from their own neceſſary concerns, ought to employ moſt time therein. For what reaſonable pretence can be made for the total neglect thereof? Who is there who has ſo much Buſineſs, as that when he riſeth in the Morning, he cannot ſecure ſo much time to himſelf, as may ſuffice to return Thanks for that comfortable Repoſe which has been afforded him, and to beg God's Protection the following day. Or that when he is about to lay himſelf down to Sleep, he cannot ſpare a few Minutes to commit himſelf to the cuſtody of him who neither ſlumbreth nor ſleepeth?

It is not the number of words which God is pleaſed with upon ſuch an occaſion; and they who have not leiſure to pour forth their Souls in ſome longer Petition, will be accepted by him if they do it in ſome leſſer Form. And it may be found by Experience, that to keep up a Reverence for him within our Minds, it will be much better to

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uſe only the Lord's Prayer, provided it be done with due Attention and Devotion, than not to Pray at all.

They indeed ſeem to have moſt to ſay for their being excus'd from this Duty of private Prayer, who Pray daily with their Families, or are conſtant at the Prayers of the Church; neither can there be any doubt, but that upon particular occaſions it may be lawfully omitted by them. But beſides, that praying when we are a lone, and by our ſelves, does diſpoſe us to Pray with more affection when we Pray with others. There are ſome caſes wherein private Prayer is abſolutely neceſſary, and we ſhall not be able to Pray to God in ſuch a manner as we ought to Pray unto him, unleſs we Pray by our ſelves.

As for example, When we know our ſelves to have been lately guilty of any particular Sins, in order to beget within our Minds an hearty Sorrow for them, and to eſtabliſh and confirm our Reſolutions in forſaking them; It is fit that we lay them open in the preſence of God, together with all their aggravating circumſtances: That we bewail our Folly and Ingratitude with

Floods

Floods of Tears, with ringing of Hands, moſt bitter Sighs and Groans, and all the other ſigns of true Contrition: That we be more than ordinarily earneſt at the Throne of Grace for Pardon and Forgiveneſs. And how can this at any other time be done, than when we are alone, where we are not tied up to thoſe rules of Speech and behaviour as we are all the while we are placed in the ſight of others?

Thus when any great misfortune befalls us, it becomes us to bemoan our ſelves in Private, and (in ſuch a paſſionate way, as it may not be ſo Decent to make ſhow of in publick) to intreat the Almighty to remove thoſe Evils with which we are oppreſſed.

So in matters of great conſequence and difficulty, where we are either to adviſe and act our ſelves, or to de-pend upon the advice and actions of others; our Caſe is after a more particular manner to be made known to God, and we are to inlarge upon it (which cannot be done in publick) with ſuch peculiar Expreſſions as do beſt ſuit it, and do at the ſame time teſtifie our reliance to be wholly upon him for his Favour and Direction.

So when we Pray for others, for ſome particular

ticular Perſons who are very dear unto us; for ſome kind Friend who Languiſheth on the Bed of Sickneſs; for ſome near Relation whoſe Perſon is expoſed to very great difficulties and dangers, what lifting up of Eyes and Hands, what humble Proſtrations ought we to uſe, what earneſt ſtruglings with God on ſuch an ones behalf? All which it is moſt fit that God ſhould be the only witneſs of, and no body elſe.

In the laſt place, when God ſhews extraordinary kindneſs to any one, when he delivers him out of danger, when he bleſſes his endeavours with unexpected ſucceſs, makes him thrive and proſper in the World after a more peculiar manner, and the footſteps of a Divine Providence concerning it ſelf on his behalf, are manifeſtly ſeen in ſeveral remarkable inſtances; It does behove him who is thus bleſt, to fall down upon his Knees, and acknowledg the kindneſs of God towards him.

But this can't be done with that Attention, that Fervencie, that particular Enumeration of all thoſe events wherein he has had ſucceſs, as when being alone, he is allowed the liberty of expreſſing his thankfulneſs to God with what words and geſtures he ſhall judg moſt fit and proper. In

In publick Forms of Prayer (wherein we joyn with others) there are indeed always ſuch general Expreſſions as do contain under them all particular Caſes whatſoever. And therefore the Devout Chriſtian, does without queſtion, as he goes along with the Offices of the Church, confeſs all his particular Sins, does make known his particular Wants, does give Thanks for all the particular Mercies which have been beſtowed on him.

But the Mind in ſuch a caſe, has not time to dwell upon theſe things ſo long and ſo particularly as it ought to do.

And therefore upon particular occaſions a Man muſt retire into his Cloſet, and there uſe particular Offices of his own making; that ſo he may with the greater Paſſion, either bewail any Sin which he has newly committed, or beg what at preſent he ſtands moſt in need of, or give Thanks for what he has lately received.

2*dly*, The private Worſhip of God conſiſts in frequently Converſing with the Scriptures, and ſuch good Books as treat about Religious Matters.

The Scriptures do contain a perfect account of all thoſe things, the knowledg whereof is neceſſary to make us wiſe unto Salvation.

They do give us an exact Scheme of all God's Laws.

They do acquaint us with what he has pro-

miſed to do for us, and what he expects at our hands for all his kindneſs towards us.

So that the more we conſult the Sacred Oracles, the more we ſhall become acquainted with our Duty, and underſtand how we ought to behave our ſelves towards God in all inſtances whatſoever.

And as Good and Pious Books are ſo many Paraphraſes and Commentaries upon the Holy Scriptures; by how much the more time we ſpend in being Converſant with them, the more fully will our Duty be explain'd to us. The more ſtrongly will the Arguments and Motives to prevail with us to Practiſe it, be imprinted on our minds.

And here again, as to the fixing how much time is to be ſpent in a concern of ſuch great conſequence, it muſt be left to the Conſcience of every particular perſon, who beſt underſtands how much he can ſpare from what he may juſtly call his neceſſary Affairs. But it muſt be great imprudence in any one to ſuffer himſelf to be ſo much imployed as not to be at leaſure to Read ſome ſmall Portion of the Word of God every day, and now and then a page or two in ſome good Book that treats about Religion and Vertue.

What numbers of hours do many of us ſquander away in poring on the News-books and thoſe trivial

trivial Pamphlets, which ſwarm amongſt us.

Should we not do much better, if inſtead of thoſe which are the moſt Innocent and moſt Diverting, (how much rather, if inſtead of thoſe which are good for nothing but to debauch our Minds, by ſtamping on them a reliſh of Vice, even of thoſe Vices, which we have not, perhaps, as yet dared to Practiſe.)

If, I ſay, inſtead of theſe, we took ſome times the Writings of the Inſpired Pen-men into our hands, and carefully peruſed the *Sacred* Records of thoſe Divine Truths, which Heaven by them, has thought fit to Reveal unto us?

As for ſuch as have abundance of Buſineſs, ſuch as are forced in the ſweat of their Brows to Eat their Bread, even theſe would find that their Buſineſs went on with much greater ſatisfaction to themſelves, and that they had reaſon to hope that their Labours would be ſooner bleſſed with *Succeſs*, if the ſtudy of God's Word was intermixed with them: And they were as intent ſometimes upon underſtanding the Precepts of *Moſes* and the Prophets, of Chriſt and the Apoſtles, in reference to their Eternal Welfare, as they are upon learning the ſeveral Rules of their Arts and Callings in reference to their Temporal Advantage.

But as for thoſe whom God has bleſt with a plentiful Subſiſtance in this World, who have no

occaſion to Toil and Moil for the making a due proviſion for themſelves and Families: What can they offer in excuſe, if they don't appropriate part of that time, which will be otherwiſe too often ſpent in folly and wickedneſs, in this uſeful and (as they may find by experience, if they pleaſe) this delightful way of filling their minds with all manner of Divine Knowledg?

But how muſt it needs be matter of Wonder and Lamentation too, ſhould ſuch as theſe prefer as a more acceptable Entertainment, the paſſionate Diſcourſes of fond Lovers, the Relation of ſome Bloody War, or Deceitful Treaty, the Rithms of ſome needy Athieſt, the cunning Obſervations of Crafty Politicians, before the moſt endearing Expreſſions of a good and gracious God to wo ſinners to Repentance? Before the Hiſtory of his own Son's glorious undertaking in the Fleſh, and of that Covenant which was ratified in his Blood for us? Before the Devout Pſalms of *David*, the Wiſe Maxims of *Solomon*, St. *Paul*'s admirable Counſels and Directions how to behave our ſelves in all our ſeveral Relations inoffenſively towards God and towards Man?

3*dly*, The private Worſhip of God conſiſts in private Meditation upon Spiritual things.

It is not enough to underſtand our Duty, unleſs we endeavour all we can to imprint it on our Memories,

mories, and to make it familiar unto us, that ſo we may be the more eaſily preval'd with to practiſe it.

Now how can this ſo well be effected, as when being alone, we do often recollect into our minds what we have learnt from the Scriptures, and do dwell ſome time in the Contemplation of it?

And therefore the Holy Pſalmiſt giving a Deſcription, *Pſal.* 1. 2. of one who delighted in the Law of God, ſaith of him, *That he meditated therein day and night*, i. e. When he was alone in the day time, when at night all the reſt of Mankind were aſleep, and he only awake;

Then was he muſing upon the Excellency of Religion, and the many Advantages which attend an Holy and Godly Life;

Then was he admiring the Wonderful Works of God's Creation and Providence;

Then was he carefully Examining the Nature of his Duty, and how far his Actions had been conformable thereunto;

Then was he conſidering within himſelf the many Arguments and Motives to the Performance of it, and what a Folly it would be to neglect ſo reaſonable a Service;

Then it was that he was pleaſing himſelf with the thoughts of having made Vertue his choice, and that when others ſpent all their time in the grati-

gratification of their ſinful Luſts and Affections, he had made it the chief end of all his endeavours to pleaſe God.

So many are the Temptations with which we are ſurrounded, and ſo powerful an influence thoſe things which affect our Senſes, are wont to have upon us, that it is plainly neceſſary for us to retire ſome times at a diſtance from them, and to be wholly intent on the Contemplation of Spiritual things; that ſo theſe nobler Objects may leſſen the others influence, and by making a laſting impreſſion of themſelves upon our minds, may prevent their enticing us to act contrary to any of the Divine Precepts.

God does not tie us up to ſuch hard terms, as to oblige us to ſpend all our Time in the Contemplation of them.

He knows that in this imperfect State, neither our neceſſary Affairs will allow of it, nor theſe lumpiſh Bodies of Clay which we carry about with us, endure it.

And therefore, all that he requires at our hands is, that we would not permit our temporal Concerns to take up all our thoughts and time, nor ſuffer our Recreations (which are only allowed us for our preſent refreſhment, and to renew our decayed Spirits) to divert us wholly from Meditating upon thoſe Truths, upon the know-

knowledg whereof our Eternal Happineſs ſo much depends.

4*thly* and Laſtly, The private worſhip of God conſiſts in ſecret Reflections and ſhort Ejaculations in all places, at all times of the day, and in all tranſactions of Life.

The truly Devout Chriſtian is not content to have his ſet times for the keeping up within his mind a ſenſe of God and Religion: But where-ever he is, and what-ever he is doing, he takes care that ſomething of Devotion towards God be intermixed with all his Actions.

Is he ſuddainly invited, or urgent buſineſs preſſes him to go where he is likely to meet with temptations? He as ſuddainly makes ſome private Reſolutions within himſelf to withſtand them with all his might, and in a word or two, begs of God to inable him to keep ſuch his reſolution.

Does he at any time fail in his Duty?

He immediately cries out, *God be merciful to me a Sinner.*

Is he unexpectly called to enter upon ſome conſiderable Action?

He in the ſame Minute, with ſome ſhort Sentence or other, intreats the Almighty to give him Succeſs therein.

Does any ſuddain Misfortune befal him?

It is leſs than I deſerve, he cries, but for thy good-

goodneſs ſake take pity on me, O thou Preſerver of Men!

Do things fall out according to his Wiſhes? O what grateful Expreſſions flow from him!

And thus in all Occurrences whatſoever, he keeps up a Reverence for his Maker, and expreſſes a due eſteem and value for him. And this he does with eaſe, without giving the leaſt trouble to the Company, with which he converſes, or at all diſturbing his own Affairs.

His innocent Mirth is not at all damped by any ſuch pious Reflexions: Nor does his buſineſs the leſs go forward for thoſe ſhort Ejaculations, which upon ſuch occaſions breath from him.

And therefore if there could be any excuſe made for the neglect of thoſe other parts of private Worſhip, there can be none made for the neglect of this. For it is ſuch a reſpect to God, as neither the greateſt Perſonages, nor the moſt Worldly-minded Men can want leiſure, nor thoſe of the moſt ordinary Capacity, power to perform. For what Man of what quality or condition ſoever, may not on the ſuddain, in ſome ſort of words or other (or what though it be without words) either beg God's Aſſiſtance in what he is about to undertake, or thank him for any good that has befaln him, or intreat him to forgive what he has done amiſs, to remove thoſe

miſ

misfortunes which have hapned to him; and to pour into his Lap what he ſhall judg moſt fit and convenient for him:

So that although upon ſome extraordinary emergency, or for want of Abilities, either private Prayer, or reading the Scriptures, or Meditation upon Divine things, ſhould happen to be omitted by us; yet there can be no reaſon why this laſt way of Serving God in ſecret ſhould.

When we are Dreſſing our ſelves in our Chambers, when we are Walking in the Streets, when we are making of Bargains and Contracts, when we are Eating and Drinking, in what Affair ſoever we are ingaged, what trouble can it be to us to awaken now and then within our Minds a Devout Thought, an Holy Wiſh, a Pious Reſolution, or to Offer up to God ſome ſhort comprehenſive Petition as may be moſt ſuitable to our preſent Circumſtances?

Having thus Diſcourſed of the Nature of that private Worſhip which may be uſed by particular Chriſtians when they are alone, I deſire in the ſecond place, that theſe following Advantages, which will certainly accrue to thoſe who are conſtant in the Performance thereof, may be conſidered by us.

1. That hereby we ſhall be prompted to perform all Religious Duties with much greater Strictneſs and Accuracy.

2. That we ſhall hereby gain for our great *Sa*tisfaction and Comfort, one of the moſt convinc-ing Arguments of our own *Sincerity*.

3. That we ſhall hereby be beſt inabled to perform all Acts of Publick Worſhip after the moſt Solemn manner.

4. That this will be a moſt excellent Preparation for Death, which is ſo uncertain.

5*thly*, and Laſtly, That it will very much increaſe our Joy hereafter, to be openly rewarded for what we have done thus in Secret.

I begin with the firſt, That by our thus Worſhiping God in Secret, we ſhall be prompted to perform all Religious Duties with much greater ſtrictneſs and accuracy.

If any thing can make us in all reſpects truly Religious, it muſt be an inſight into the Nature of Spiritual things, and a frequent application of our Minds to the Contemplation of them.

When therefore any one by his own ſet times of Prayer, by his daily Reading the Scriptures, by conſtant Meditation upon God and Vertue, has diſpoſed his Soul to be heartily Affected with what concerns its Immortal Welfare; when he has brought himſelf to that paſs, as in every Action of his Life to intermix ſomething of Devotion towards God.

How muſt this needs, if any thing can, make him

him eager ſo to behave himſelf in all reſpects whatſoever, as may Intitle him to an higher intereſt in God's Favour, and to the expectations of greater Bliſs hereafter ?

Theſe things do lay a kind of force upon him to be Religious, and to ſtrive as much as he can to improve in every Grace and Vertue.

When by his being thus conſtantlyEmployed in the Contemplation of Spiritual things, he has them always in his View, he muſt do Violence to himſelf to run contrary to them.

And it will be no ſmall Puniſhment to him at the firſt, if by a wilful Tranſgreſſion of his Duty he Lives in a direct Oppoſition to his own Sentiments.

It is the want of a due ſenſe of Holy things which makes Men ſo Irreligious as they are.

They have no true Apprehenſions, no reliſh of Divine matters, and this makes them run from them as far as they can.

Were but an early ſenſe of them impreſſed upon their Minds by thoſe ways which I have been ſpeaking of, they would not have the hardineſs to be guilty of thoſe wicked Practices which we now ſee daily Committed by them. Their Conſciences being by this means kept *in Life and Senſe*, would render them uneaſie whenever they go about to Tranſgreſs any known Duty. They

would be always repreſenting to them the equity of God's Laws, the greatneſs of the Rewards which accompany them; The ſeverity of the Puniſhment which follows the neglect of them; Their own Folly and Ingratitude, ſhould they deſpiſe ſuch excellent Means of Salvation as are ſet before them.

And what can deter Men from acting a miſs? nay, What can ſpur them on to further Advancements in all manner of Vertuous and Holy Living, if the Conſideration of theſe things thus forcibly urged upon their Minds cannot?

2*dly*, Another Advantage which would accrue to us by our thus Worſhiping God in *Secret*, is, that hereby we ſhall obtain for our inward Comfort and Satisfaction, one of the moſt convincing Arguments of our own Sincerity.

Nothing affords a greater Satisfaction to any ones Mind, than to be able to Juſtify his own Proceedings to himſelf, and to be fully Convinced that his Behaviour has been ſuch as it ought to have been.

Now there is no better way to gain ſuch a Comfortable Aſſurance of having done Well, as by thus ſecretly Devoting our ſelves to God's Service.

Let Men ſeem never ſo Zealous in their Publick Devotion, it may all be Counterfeit, and in order only to promote ſome diſhoneſt deſign.

Thus

Thus the Devotion of the Phariſees, how ſpecious ſoever it appeared, was only to be ſeen of Men, and that they might thereby gain a better opportunity of devouring Widows Houſes.

So that as to what is done in the ſight of others, although it may be done at ſome times with a very honeſt intent, yet at other times we may be deceived therein, and phanſie we are doing God's Service, when it is only ſerving our ſelves of ſome Temporal Advantage, which we hope thereby to promote.

But now when what we do is in ſecret, and no body ſees us but God himſelf; when we might have followed the example of the reſt of the World, who never trouble themſelves about theſe mattrers; and yet we have choſen rather to do our Duty privately, and to approve our ſelves to God in a way which is only Cognoſcible by him and by no body elſe;

This muſt needs convince us of our Sincerity, and afford us the Satisfaction of being inwardly aſſur'd that we have a greater regard for God and Vertue, than we have for any thing elſe beſides.

3*dly*. That we may be the more perſwaded thus to Worſhip God in ſecret, let us conſider that hereby we ſhall be beſt inabled to perform all acts of publick Worſhip after the moſt ſolemn manner.

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The reaſon why many keep away from the ſolemn Aſſemblies, and others behave themſelves ſo Irreverently whilſt they are preſent at them, is, becauſe they want thoſe diſpoſitions of Mind as would qualifie them to attend upon Holy things with delight and ſatisfaction.

Their Souls do every Minute hanker after unlawful Objects.

They are wholly intent upon the Vanities and Pleaſures of this World, and this makes them have ſo little a kindneſs for what ever relates to God and Religion : So that they come to the publick Worſhip, as if it were to their own Execution, and are glad of any excuſes to keep from it.

Now had they but accuſtom'd themſelves to the Worſhip of God in private, they would be ſo far from being averſe to the Worſhip of him in publick, as to be glad of any ſuch kind invitation, *Let us go into the Houſe of the Lord.*

Their Minds being beforehand Raviſhed in the delightful Contemplation of the Divine Attributes of God's moſt Holy Laws, of what he has done, and is ready to do for thoſe who ſincerely Love him.

What Devout Exerciſes can come amiſs to them ?

Their

Their Harps are always ſtrung, and their Souls always in Tune to Sing Anthems of Praiſe and Thankſgiving to their Heavenly Maker.

They enter his Courts with Joy, and whilſt others are full of Coldneſs and Indifferency towards the Worſhip of him, there is no Holy Ordinance on which they don't attend with great Pleaſure and Satisfaction.

4*thly*. Another Advantage which attends the private Worſhip of God, is, that it will be an excellent preparation againſt Death.

Since Life is ſo uncertain, and there are ſo many things which can ſnatch us out of the World before we are aware;

It mightily concerns us ſo to order our Affairs as that we may be fit to go hence on the ſuddain with Comfort and Satisfaction.

Our future Happineſs depends upon thoſe diſpoſitions, which we carry out of the World with us.

As we are affected towards God and Vertue when we go off this Stage, ſuch will be our Reward hereafter.

To have our Oyl therefore to Buy, and our Lamps to Trim when the Bridegroom Summons us to Attend him, is the way to be for ever Excluded from the Marriage Feaſt.

And

And therefore although the Fooliſh part of Mankind go on unconcerned in their Wicked Courſes, and Live whilſt they are here, as if they never were to Live any where elſe.

Yet the more Prudent, who know that their beſt Stake is in another World, will endeavour to ſecure it by being always prepared to leave their preſent Station with ſuch a temper of Mind as will moſt certainly Intitle them to the Joys that are above.

Now what can better tend to effect this, than to keep up within our Minds a conſtant Reſpect for God, and for his moſt Righteous Laws, by this private Worſhip of him?

When we do every day in ſecret lament our paſt Follies, and are earneſt for his Pardon and Forgiveneſs;

When we do every day expreſs our dependance on him, by beſeeching him to give us what is moſt fit and convenient for us, and by giving hearty Thanks for thoſe Mercies which we have already received at his Hands;

When we do every Day by our ſelves admire the extraordinary perfections of the Divine Nature;

Are intent in our Meditations upon his Commandments;

Are Raviſhed in the Contemplation of his unſpeakable Kindneſs towards us; When

When Devout Thoughts do every moment ſpring up within us, and Pious Expreſſions flow from us;

When we are always thus diſpoſed, how can Death at any time ſurpriſe us? We may bid it Well-come every hour of the day.

It is the greateſt Bleſſing as can happen to thoſe who are thus prepared for it; for it Tranſplants them into a place where their Minds will be full of the ſame Pious Thoughts and Affections, and where they will produce the ſame Vertues they do here, but with far more Eaſe and Tranſport, being freed from all thoſe Troubles and Incumbrances which Clog and Imbitter, at preſent, our moſt Religious performances.

5*thly*. and Laſtly, It will very much increaſe our Joy hereafter, to be openly Rewarded for what we have done thus in ſecret.

This is the Argument which our Saviour here makes uſe of to perſwade his Diſciples not to take the Phariſees for their Example (who made a great ſhow of Piety, only that they might be ſeen of Men:)

But to approve themſelves to God, altho it were never ſo Privately.

Viz. That how few ſoever the Advantages might happen to be, which would accrue to them by ſuch their Behaviour at preſent; yet

they would be made a ſufficient amends, and that publickly too, hereafter.

Thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly.

Although Devout Chriſtians make no noiſe in the World, but chearfully Pay the great Creator of all things that Tribute which they know juſtly to belong to him:

Yet he who is a conſtant Inſpector of their Hearts, who knows their Integrity, and beholds their Devout Carriage, when it is hid from all the World beſides; will not ſuffer it to be always covered with Darkneſs, but will one day make it manifeſt, to the Eternal Honour and Advantage of ſuch his Good and Faithful Servants.

The time will come when in the Preſence of all his Holy Angels, and Immortal Spirits, he will call them forth, and himſelf bear publick Teſtimony to the Sincerity of their Affections towards him.

Then will their frequent Prayers, their diligent Study of the Scriptures, their devout Meditations, their Pious Reflections, their Heavenly Ejaculations be all Enumerated, and every thing which they have done in Secret, be ſet in a due Light.

Upon

Upon the Diſcovery whereof, how will thoſe Glorious Beings above Admire ſuch their Devotion!

How will they run into their Embraces, and Congratulate the great Honour God has done them, in thus making manifeſt thoſe Excellencies in them, which none before but himſelf had any knowledg of!

And what can afford them greater Satisfaction of Mind, than to have the Supreme Governour of all things, and their moſt Merciful Father thus to atteſt their Piety, and thoſe who are his chiefeſt Favourites, and make the neareſt approaches unto him, upon their knowledg thereof, to Love and Applaud them for it?

To Conclude then this whole Diſcourſe; we ſee what great Advantages the Worſhip of God in Secret brings along with it.

Let us deal impartially with our own Souls, and not ſuffer any pretences whatſoever, by cauſing any neglect thereof, to deprive us of them:

But let us from our Pleaſures, from our Buſineſs reſerve ſome time thus to Pray unto God, to give him Thanks, to Converſe with his Sacred Oracles, to Meditate upon Holy Things, and to

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pour out our Souls in Private Whiſpers unto him upon all Emergencies whatſoever;

That ſo having by this means fixed a true Principle of Holineſs within us;

Having furniſhed our Minds with ſuch excellent Diſpoſitions as do beſt qualifie us to be made Partakers of the Heavenly State;

In a word, having made our ſelves throughly acquainted with God and his moſt Righteous Laws, we may from hence be Inſtructed ſo to Behave our ſelves towards him in this World, that we may Live for Ever in his Preſence in the World to come.

FINIS.